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SCOTT: PASSAGE OF HB 5156 PUTS HIGHLAND PARK DEBT IN REARVIEW MIRROR

LANSING- State Senator Martha G. Scott (D-Highland Park) today praised her Senate colleagues for approving House Bill 5156, legislation that will allow the city of Highland Park to restructure its existing debt as part of a plan to return to fiscal stability. The legislation amends the Home Rule City Act to authorize the state-appointed Emergency Financial Manager to issue fiscal stabilization bonds that exceed Highland Park's bond cap.

"I want to thank my Senate colleagues for extending this life-line to Highland Park," Sen. Scott said. "This legislation will not cost the state of Michigan one dime but it is an important component of the plan that will allow Highland Park to resolve its own financial problems."

The bill's passage also ensures that the approximately 450 City of Highland Park retirees will continue get their pension checks from the municipality's pension fund, which would otherwise have been insolvent in early 2004. The planned bond sale will be supervised by the state-appointed Emergency Financial Manager, and proceeds from the sale of a city-owned tree farm will be used to repay part of the debt.

"Once this financial crisis is resolved, Highland Park will again be able to plan for the long-term and focus more on other issues important to the community," Scott said. "This has been a long and difficult process but the community has maintained its dignity throughout and I'm confident it will emerge from this process stronger than ever."

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